

WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (WEP)

CAMBODIA 2018 – 2022

EVALUATION REPORT | Executive summary

AOP has worked with CWCC to implement the "Women Economic Empowerment" project (WEP) in Cambodia with funding support from the Australian Government's NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). The project's implementation efforts involving savings groups and particular methods of saving for changes have increased the economic empowerment of women in terms of their ability to make financial decisions for their families and the community. Women in the community built up their financial and social capital as a result.

The project's location is in Kampong Thom, which is one of the poorest provinces in Cambodia. The project aimed to empower women to become economically self-sufficient by promoting Savings groups and Women's Small Businesses. The project's expected outcomes are 1) Empowered women can generate income through group businesses and small enterprises, 2) Social safety nets are in place in the target areas to support vulnerable women to curb financial crisis and all forms of violence, 3) Girls of underprivileged families who are members of the savings groups can access vocational/professional training and generate income by using the acquired skills. The evaluation results from the project have significantly shown that all the outputs have been achieved as planned.

Relevance: The project's interventions have addressed the current concerns surrounding women's economic empowerment, particularly for those who lack access to resources for income-generating activities and who are only expected to do household duties due to social expectations. While managing the saving groups and their business ventures, women's bookkeeping and other financial expertise has improved, contributing to their higher contribution to household incomes, which consequently really boosts their confidence.

Coherence: The project intervention has contributed to the country's challenge on women economic empowerment (WEE); those challenges have been addressed, and the target women informed they have changed through the activities delivered by CWCC. The project was aligned with national strategies and AOP/CWCC program strategic plan. The results from project implementation have directly contributed to the first outcome of Neary Rattanak V which is a 5-year (2019 -2023) national strategic plan for strengthening gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment.

Effectiveness: The project has progressed toward the expected outcomes. The participating women showed not only their enhanced financial literacy but also increased confidence and independence. The supported saving groups also served as a protection mechanism against domestic violence. Satisfactory was found among target women beneficiaries in their level of economic empowerment. The flexibility of the project design had certain advantages in terms of increased responsiveness to emerging opportunities and challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis.

Efficiency: The project was cost-effective and provided good value for money. The majority of the financial resource has been invested in enhanced vocational skills and capacity building, start-up individual and group business, and COVID-19 responses. Those interventions ensure economic sustainability for the target women and allow the flexibility to use a budget to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic that has stopped all economic activities for income generation.

Impact: The project intervention has changed women's behavior, increased their confidence and recognition. The leaders of the saving groups have gained more confidence and can lead the groups successfully.

Sustainability: The emphasis on sustainability is to ensure the independence of the savings groups with their equipped skills and capability to the operation of the group and gained recognition from the local authority. The model has high possibility to be replicated in other areas with similar situation as in Kampong Thom.

Project Management: The project team is fully equipped with capacity to deliver the project; the project team at the head office and regional offices have supported each other to ensure the project delivers in an effective and timely manner. The project lessons learned, challenges, risks have been addressed, reflected and documented in the reports and ensure those informed of the decision and project improvement for the next period.